

Slot Machine with Escalating Symbol Values

Cross-Reference to Related Application

This application is a divisional application of U.S. Application Serial No. 10/304,723, filed November 25, 2002, entitled "Slot Machine with Escalating Symbol Values", now pending, and is also based on and claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial Number 60/347467, filed January 14, 2002, entitled "Slot Machine with Escalating Symbol Values."

This invention relates primarily to electronic video gaming devices, and more particularly to electronic video slot machines that have symbol values that change and increase during the play of the game. While the present invention has many variations, the basic principle common to all of the variations is that whenever the player achieves a winning symbol combination, either on a pay line or as a scatter pay, the player is provided with an extra spin during which a higher value symbol set is substituted for the first symbol set. The extra spin may be a free spin or the player may be required to make an additional wager for this extra spin.

Background of the Invention

Reel slot machines have been used in gaming establishments for more than one hundred years. The traditional reel slot machine has three mechanical reels that rotate around a common horizontal axis. A reel strip is attached around the circumference of each slot reel and the reel strip contains a plurality of symbols thereon. As each reel comes to a stop, a symbol on the perimeter of the reel strip is displayed on a horizontal pay line on the face of the gaming machine. If the symbols that align on the pay line match one of the preselected winning combinations, the player is a winner.

Newer slot machines have been developed that have multiple pay lines -- such as additional horizontal pay lines, diagonal pay lines, V-shaped pay lines, W-shaped pay lines and staggered pay lines. The number of reels have been increased beyond the basic three reel slot machines; four reels, five reels and more have been used up to the classic Big Bertha slot machine that has ten reels.

Besides using mechanical reels, slot machines have been developed that use video representations of spinning reels. One

1 of the more popular video reel slot machines uses five reels with
2 nine pay lines. When the video representation of the reels stop
3 spinning, fifteen symbols are displayed to the player disposed in
4 three horizontal rows and five vertical columns. On this three-
5 by-five matrix formed by the three rows and five columns of
6 symbols that are shown, multiple separate pay lines can be pro-
7 vided.

8 These multiple pay lines can take almost any configuration.
9

1 Typically, pay line #1 is the center horizontal row as shown:

X	X	X	X	X

2

3 Pay line #2 is the top horizontal row as shown:

X	X	X	X	X

4

5 Pay line #3 is the bottom horizontal row as shown:

X	X	X	X	X

6

1 After these three traditional pay lines, other pay lines can
2 be allocated in any configuration, such as V-shaped, inverted V
3 shaped, W-shaped, inverted W-shaped and even staggered pay lines.
4 A typical staggered pay line would be as shown:

				X
			X	
X	X	X		

5
6 It is also known to provide payouts that are not on a
7 particular pay line that is selected by the player. These payouts
8 are known as scatter pay payouts and are awarded when three or
9 more identical symbols occur anywhere in the display matrix. A
10 typical scatter pay award would be as shown:

	X			
X			X	

11

1 These pay line configurations and scatter pay configurations
2 are merely representative of any of a myriad of pay line
3 configurations and scatter pay configurations that can be used.

4 A plethora of winning symbol combinations are provided so that
5 the player has a large number of various opportunities to win
6 depending on which symbols are displayed in which locations on the
7 reels when the reels stop spinning.

8 It is an object of the present invention to provide a slot
9 machine that operates in a manner in which the player can receive
10 increased payouts as the game progresses.

11 It is a feature of the present invention that the symbols used
12 to indicate winning combinations increase in value for each spin
13 of the reels following a spin that results in a winning
14 combination. The player may receive these additional spins using
15 symbols having higher values either as free spins or as spins for
16 which the player must make an additional wager.

17 It is an advantage of the present invention that a player may
18 receive increased payouts when the player achieves winning
19 combinations on consecutive spins of the reels. This allows the
20 player to achieve higher and higher payouts when the player has a

1 run of good luck and achieves winning symbol combinations on two
2 or more spins in a row.

3 Other objects, features and advantages of the present
4 invention will become apparent from a consideration of the
5 following detailed description.

6

7 **Summary of the Invention**

8 A player makes a wager for each pay line on a slot machine
9 that the player wishes to play. In the preferred embodiment, the
10 slot machine has multiple reels with multiple rows, such as a five
11 reel machine with a three row display. One or more pay lines can
12 be used. A first set of slot symbols are used for the first spin
13 of the reels.

14 If the player achieves a winning combination of symbols on one
15 or more active pay lines, the player is provided with a second
16 spin of the slot reels, but this time the first set of slot
17 symbols have been replaced with a second set of slot symbols that
18 have higher potential payouts. This second spin of the slot reels
19 can be a free spin or the player can be required to make an
20 additional wager for this second spin.

1 reels with the symbols from the third symbol set displayed.

2 Figure 4 shows the screen display of the slot reels of the
3 present invention after the player has made the fourth spin of the
4 reels with the symbols from the fourth symbol set displayed.

5

6 Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

7 The present invention involves a method of operating an
8 electronic video slot machine in which the symbols on the reels
9 increase in value after every winning spin of the slot reels.

10 An electronic video slot machine of the present invention is
11 programmed to display multiple pay lines with each pay line
12 displaying a reel symbol associated with each reel location. The
13 present invention includes plurality of reel symbols that can be
14 displayed on each reel location on the video display of the video
15 slot machine. A first group of reel symbols are used for the
16 first spin of the reels. If the player achieves a winning symbol
17 combination on the first spin of the reels, a second set of reel
18 symbols having a higher value are used for the second spin of the
19 reels. For each consecutive spin of the reels that results in a
20 winning symbol combination, another set of reel symbols are used

1 having increasing values. Once the player spins the reels and has
2 no winning symbol combinations, the video slot machine resets to
3 the first group of reel symbols.

4 Alternatively, when a player achieves a losing spin, the video
5 slot machine could be reset to one of the previous groups of reel
6 symbols rather than all the way back to the first group of reel
7 symbols. The resetting of the video slot machine to one of the
8 previous groups of reel symbols could be either on a preselected
9 schedule or randomly.

10 In the method of play of the present invention, a player makes
11 a wager for each pay line on a slot machine that the player wishes
12 to play. In the preferred embodiment, the slot machine has
13 multiple reels with multiple rows, such as five reels with a three
14 row display as shown in the drawings. One or more pay lines can
15 be used. Each coin, token or credit wagered by the player acti-
16 vates in a predetermined, sequential order the various pay lines.
17 For example, if the video slot machine has nine pay lines
18 available, the player must wager nine coins to activate all nine
19 pay lines with one coin on each line. A maximum of five credits
20 is usually allowed (although other gaming machines of this type

1 can have a maximum number of credits less than five or more than
2 five up to as many as twenty per pay line) on each pay line, so
3 the maximum wager by the player would be forty-five credits.

4 A first group of slot symbols are used for the first spin of
5 the reels. These slot symbols can be any quantity having any
6 values for achieving winning symbol combinations. Any suitable
7 types of winning symbol combinations can be used and the video
8 slot machine would include a pay table to apprise the player of
9 which symbol combinations award which amounts.

10 For example, as shown in Figure 1, the reel symbols include a
11 1¢ symbol, a 5¢ symbol and a 10¢ symbol. In order to achieve a
12 winning combination, the player must achieve at least three of the
13 same reel symbols on adjoining reel locations an active pay line
14 upon which the player has made a wager. As shown in Figure 1, the
15 player has achieved three 5¢ symbols on adjoining reel locations
16 which means the player would be awarded 5¢ times the number of
17 credits wagered on the center pay line. If the player had wagered
18 five credits on the center pay line, the player would have won 25¢.

19 If the player achieves a winning combination of symbols on one
20 or more active pay lines, the player is provided with a second
21 spin of the slot reels, but this time the first set of slot

1 symbols have been replaced with a second set of slot symbols that
2 have higher potential payouts. This second spin of the slot reels
3 can be a free spin or the player can be required to make an
4 additional wager for this second spin.

5 For example, as shown in Figure 2, after the player achieved a
6 winning symbol combination on the first spin of the reels shown in
7 Figure 1, a second group of reel symbols are used for the next
8 spin of the reels. As shown in Figure 2, the second group of reel
9 symbols can include a 10¢ symbol, a 25¢ symbol and a 50¢ symbol.
10 When the player makes the second spin of the reels, the player
11 could achieve the reel symbol distribution shown in Figure 2. In
12 this example, the player would achieve a winning symbol
13 combination of five 25¢ symbols along a staggered pay line. The
14 player would be awarded 25¢ times the number of credits wagered on
15 the center pay line. If the player had wagered five credits on the
16 center pay line, the player would have won \$1.25.

17 Since the player has achieved a winning combination of symbols
18 on one of the pay lines on the second spin of the reels, a third
19 spin is offered with a third set of symbols with even higher
20 potential payouts. As happened before, the second set of slot
21 symbols have been replaced with a third set of slot symbols that

1 have even higher potential payouts. This third spin of the slot
2 reels can be a free spin or the player can be required to make an
3 additional wager for this third spin.

4 For example, as shown in Figure 3, after the player achieved a
5 winning symbol combination on the second spin of the reels shown
6 in Figure 2, a third group of reel symbols are used for the next
7 spin of the reels. As shown in Figure 3, the third group of reel
8 symbols can include a 50¢ symbol, a \$1 symbol, a \$2 symbol and a
9 \$5 symbol. When the player makes the third spin of the reels, the
10 player could achieve the reel symbol distribution shown in Figure
11 3. In this example, the player would achieve a winning symbol
12 combination of three \$2 symbols as a scatter pay award. The player
13 would be awarded \$2 times the total number of credits wagered on
14 all of the pay lines. If the player had wagered five credits on
15 each of nine pay lines for a total wager of forty-five credits, the
16 player would have won \$90.00.

17 Since the player has achieved a winning combination of
18 symbols, even as a scatter pay award as in the case of Figure 3, a
19 fourth spin is offered with a fourth set of symbols with even
20 higher potential payouts. Again as happened before, the third set
21 of slot symbols have been replaced with a fourth set of slot

1 symbols that have even higher potential payouts. This fourth spin
2 of the slot reels can be a free spin or the player can be required
3 to make an additional wager for this fourth spin.

4 For example, as shown in Figure 4, after the player achieved a
5 winning symbol combination on the third spin of the reels shown in
6 Figure 3, a fourth group of reel symbols are used for the next
7 spin of the reels. As shown in Figure 4, the fourth group of reel
8 symbols can include a \$5 symbol, a \$10 symbol, a \$15 symbol and a
9 \$25 symbol. When the player makes the fourth spin of the reels,
10 the player could achieve the reel symbol distribution shown in
11 Figure 4. In this example, the player would achieve no winning
12 symbol combinations either on a pay line or as a scatter pay
13 award. The player would lose all of his wagers and the video slot
14 machine would reset to the first group of reel symbols for the next
15 play of the game.

16 Alternatively, the video slot machine could be reset to one of
17 the previous groups of reel symbols rather than all the way back
18 to the first group of reel symbols. For example, the video slot
19 machine could be reset to either the first group of reel symbols,
20 the second group of reel symbols or the third group of slot
21 symbols. The resetting of the video slot machine to one of the

1 previous groups of reel symbols could be either on a preselected
2 schedule or randomly.

3 In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, as long as
4 the player keeps winning on each successive spin, the reel symbols
5 continue to be replaced with higher value group of reel symbols.
6 Alternatively, after a pre-established number of winning spins
7 (say five or ten consecutive winning spins), the highest value
8 group of reel symbols would continue to be used until the player
9 had a losing spin of the reels.

10 Each successive spin may be a free spin, or the player may be
11 required to make an additional wager for the successive spins or
12 the some of the successive spins may be free and others may be
13 require an additional wager.

14 Any suitable groups of pay tables can be used; with the
15 winning amounts and symbol combinations being based on the
16 mathematical return desired to be provided on the gaming machine.

17 One or more symbols may also be designated as wild symbols.
18 Wild symbols increase the possibility of player achieving winning
19 combinations and the pay table should be adjusted to reflect that
20 wild symbols are in use.

1 The number of pay lines employed in the present invention is
2 also not critical. More or less than five pay lines can be used.

3 While the invention has been illustrated with respect to
4 several specific embodiments thereof, these embodiments should be
5 considered as illustrative rather than limiting. Various
6 modifications and additions may be made and will be apparent to
7 those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the invention should not
8 be limited by the foregoing description, but rather should be
9 defined only by the following claims.